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***www.ncparks.gov* for State Parks Info and Events**

Beverly Eaves Perdue
Governor

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Dee Freeman
Secretary, DENR

ATTENDANCE STILL AT RECORD LEVEL

North Carolina's state parks and state recreation areas reported near-record visitation in 2010, with 14 million visits, less than one percent below the all-time record of 14.2 million visits in 2009.

Among 39 state parks and state recreation areas reporting, 21 logged increases in attendance in 2009, and more than a half million campers were registered during the year. Jockey's Ridge State Park in Dare County reported the highest attendance at 1.47 million visits, an increase of 3 percent over the previous year.

"North Carolina's state parks offer affordable, family-oriented recreation, and the state's citizens and visitors have come to rely on that resource as difficult economic times continue," said Lewis Ledford, state parks director. "The state parks

also continue to contribute to the economic health of local communities, particularly in rural areas and regions dependent on tourism."

A 2008 economic study

RESERVATIONS SYSTEM EMBRACED BY VISITORS

More than a quarter million visitors to North Carolina state parks used a new reservations system its first full year of operation, with most campers preferring short visits to state parks near their homes.

By far, the most popular park for camping and picnicking by reservation was Jordan Lake State Recreation Area, which logged 14,124 reservations during the year ending July 30.

It was followed by

revealed that travelers spend an average \$23.56 a day to enjoy the state parks. The analysis by North Carolina State University's Department of Parks,

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Kerr Lake State Recreation Area (6,162) and Hanging Rock (5,256), Stone Mountain (5,062) and Carolina Beach (4,410) state parks. The year-end reservations report showed that the state parks system's online and call center-based system placed 61,484 reservations for campsites, picnic shelters and other amenities.

"The reservations system has been very popular, and we anticipated an important byproduct would be detailed

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NEW EXHIBITS TELL VERY OLD STORY

Morrow Mountain State Park has a fascinating story to tell and a new exhibit hall dedicated Nov. 7 tells the story in fascinating ways.

The park is truly a crossroads of history, spanning sites of American Indian trade, early European settlement, gold mining and Depression-era efforts of the Civilian Conservation Corps, says historian Jonathan Underwood.

The state parks are also often places where per-



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ALBERTA BOGGAN CUT RIBBON ON FACILITY.

Department of Environment and Natural Resources

RESERVATIONS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

information about our visitors and how they use the parks. Over time, that will help us improve visitor service and gain more insight into how state parks contribute to local economies," said Lewis Ledford, state parks director.

A 2008 economic study by North Carolina State University concluded that the total impact to local economies from

the state parks system is conservatively \$400 million annually.

And, state parks campgrounds reported a 20 percent jump in use during the first few months that the reservations system was in place.

In July 2009, the state partnered with Infospherix, a Maryland-based company, to introduce the central reservations system for its 3,000

campsites, 106 picnic shelters and community buildings, vacation cabins and visitor center auditoriums. The system is fully supported by a \$4 surcharge for each reservation or night's stay.

The state parks attracted visitors from 16 nations during the year with Canada, Germany and the United Kingdom contributing the most foreign visitors, but reservations originated in far-flung locations such as Australia, Namibia and Sweden, as well.

North Carolinians, of course, were the most frequent visitors, and most state park campgrounds were populated by people from nearby towns, although there were exceptions. For instance, Hammocks Beach and Pilot Mountain state parks most often had campers from the Triangle area, while visitors from Charlotte most often filled Lake James, Morrow Mountain, New River and Stone Mountain state parks.

Reservations for campsites peaked in the months of April, May and June with a smaller but noticeable spike during August. The typical camping trip involved three people staying two nights on a weekend.

In total, 123,149 nights of camping were reserved.

State park visitors were most comfortable making reservations in person at a state park (47.6 percent), while 35.9 percent of the reservations were made online and 16.5 percent were made through a call center. Visitors can camp without a reservation if a site is available when they arrive. Reservations can be made up to 48 hours in advance, but not more than 11 months beforehand.

From The Director's Desk

With annual attendance at state parks still at record levels of around 14 million, it's good to have friends to help with the workload. It seems that so much of the good news from state parks recently involves volunteers.

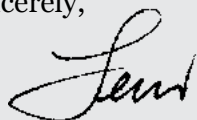
At Dismal Swamp State Park, volunteers lending a hand to build a 2,000-foot boardwalk loop included a team from AmeriCorps and the park's friends group. Of course, maintenance mechanics Carlton Griffin and Bruce Rountree did double duty organizing these work crews and doing much of the work themselves on days when volunteers couldn't be there. And, volunteers were solely responsible for creating a 25-mile stretch of the Mountains-to-Sea State Trail that was recently dedicated.

There were also examples of volunteerism that went beyond the norm. DENR employees have recently used "community service" days granted by state law to work on projects in the parks, including rehabilitation of group camps at William B. Umstead State Park. Perhaps the most creative thinking came from Fort Macon State Park and Wayne Community College in Goldsboro. Rangers, maintenance staff and instructors devised a way for industrial arts students to build an aluminum cannon carriage for Fort Macon State Park. Savings approached \$20,000.

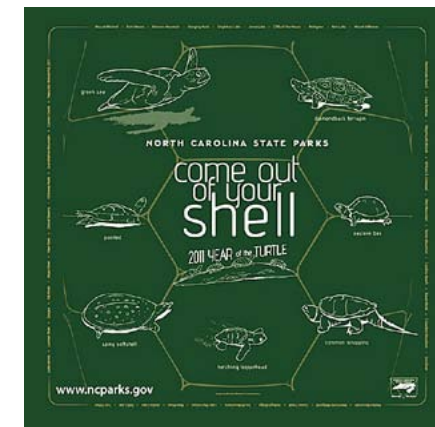
These types of "pushing the envelope" projects require a lot of coordination, planning and creativity, but the results are impressive. My sincere thanks to all those who brought their talents to bear. In the coming year, we'll be working to better publicize volunteer opportunities throughout the system.

Of course, the current state budget crisis is a backdrop to all this. There's still much to be done as the General Assembly considers the governor's proposal and how that will affect state parks and the extent to which we can minimize the impact on our visitors. (*More details on Page 8.*) Like all agencies, we're challenged to be more economical and efficient in all that we do, and fostering volunteerism is part of that effort.

Sincerely,



Lewis Ledford



BANDANA WAS DESIGNED FROM TURTLE PHOTOS TAKEN BY STATE PARK RANGERS.

IT'S YEAR OF THE TURTLE IN STATE PARKS

North Carolina state parks have declared 2011 the "Year of the Turtle," with plans for a 12-month exploration of this wildlife resource through its interpretive programs.

North Carolina is home to 21 turtle species, including the familiar box turtle, which burrows up to two feet beneath upland forests in winter, and the rare loggerhead, leatherback and green sea turtles that lumber ashore to nest on its beaches.

With the catch phrase "Come Out of Your Shell," the parks will entice visitors to learn more about this abundance with special education programs, guided hikes and activities.

This marks the second year that the state parks interpretation and education efforts have revolved around a specific nature theme, with 2010 being the "Year of the Birds," featuring more than 600 bird-themed park activities.

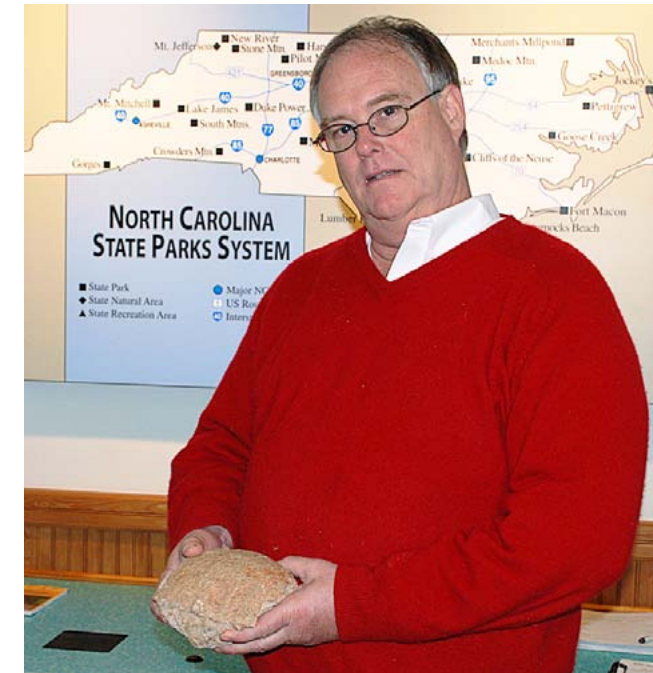
Coincidentally, the North Carolina aquariums and the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission are also participating in the "Year of the Turtle" through the Partners in Amphibian and Reptile Conservation consortium.

"An annual theme such as the 'Year of the Turtle' offers an additional pathway for adults and children to reconnect with nature in the state parks. Education is a core part of our mission, and the free interpretive programs developed by park rangers expand the experience of visitors," said Lewis Ledford, director of state parks.

Once again, the state parks are celebrating the interpretive theme with original bandanas that feature illustrations of eight turtle species, designed from photos by state park rangers. The bandanas are available for \$3 at the state parks and through the online web store at www.ncparks.gov.

Every state park has resident turtle populations, and the United States has more turtle biodiversity than any other country.

But turtle populations worldwide have declined up to 40 percent. Turtles face threats including habitat loss and degradation, mortality from roads and predators, exotic invasive species and disease and climate change. Raising awareness about turtle species can help address broader environmental issues.



TURTLE FOSSIL

ROME LYTTON, AN OIL COMPANY PALEONTOLOGIST, DONATED THIS TURTLE FOSSIL TO LAKE WACCAMAW STATE PARK IN HONOR OF THE YEAR OF THE TURTLE THEME. THE FOSSILIZED SHELL IS FROM A FRESHWATER TURTLE IN THE OLIGOCENE PERIOD ABOUT 30 MILLION YEARS AGO AND WAS FOUND IN THE BADLANDS REGION OF SOUTH DAKOTA.

FRIENDS OF TRAIL CELEBRATE ‘FIRSTS’

By Steve Meehan
Friends of Mountains-to-Sea Trail

A record 130 people attended the Friends of the Mountains-to-Sea Trail (FMST) annual meeting in February at Haw River State Park to help celebrate a series of “firsts” for the organization in 2010, including a trail hike by President Barack Obama and the First Lady.

Volunteer hours to build and maintain the trail in 2010 exceeded 18,000. Nearly 50 volunteers were recognized for donating more than 75 hours, with eight of them volunteering 200 or more hours.

“Volunteer and public support for the trail just keep building,” said Kate Dixon, FMST executive director. “Our partners at state parks have been and will be critical to keeping that momentum going.”

Also recognized were Cooper Brantley, Scott Hassenfelt and Ian Fraher of Greensboro, who through-hiked the nearly 1,000-mile trail in 2010. Twenty people have made the hike with 40 percent of those in the last two years.

Other highlights in 2010 were the completion of 25 new miles in Ashe and Watauga counties and the trail being named one of North

STUDENT’S WORK BENEFITS STATE PARK

A high school senior in Burke County provided a wonderful and unexpected present to South Mountains State Park during the Christmas season, a \$700 cash gift to the park’s friends group.

Robbie Lowman donated more than 40 hours of his time selling Christmas trees in Morganton and donated all his profits in the effort.

Lowman’s association with the state park began earlier in the year as a senior service project required for graduation.

Each student works with a mentor, generally someone established in the community and who helps guide the project. Lowman chose to work with Park Ranger Michael Eisch and wanted to do his project on the financial difficulties that state parks are facing.

Eisch recruited Lowman to volunteer for a number of park projects including work at the park’s annual Nature Day event.

“The ambition that Robbie demonstrated while volunteering in the park is exactly what will make him an exceptional ranger candidate,”

Carolina’s top 10 natural wonders. Howard Lee, former N.C. Secretary of Natural Resources and Community Development, was keynote speaker. As secretary, Lee proposed the trail in 1977 at a National Trails Conference.

Lee said the work done by volunteers has been one of the most extraordinary achievements in the history of the state. He said the influence of the trail now stretches far beyond its corridor, as it has been a catalyst for trails in other parts of the state and a rallying point for bringing people together.

His inspirational speech also commended some early pioneers of the trail, including former state parks employee Jim Hallsey, current trails program chief Darrell McBane and longtime trail champion Allen DeHart.

He encouraged those attending to keep building and enlist others to help.

“The North Carolinians I know take great pride in helping others,” he said. “We just need to keep tapping into that strength and sense of purpose.”

The speech finished on an upbeat note as Lee asked everyone to join him in a version of “Happy Trails to You.”

Eisch said.

Lowman said he wanted to help the park in a more tangible way and made a deal with his uncle who raises Christmas trees. Lowman bought 50 trees from his uncle for resale.

“Walt Gravely, president of the friends group, said, “It is refreshing to witness the type of selflessness Robbie has demonstrated. His participation in this manner inspires others, both young and old, to get involved in helping our state parks.”

The gift will be used for park projects for which state funding is not available.

“It is certainly comforting to know that there are those in the upcoming generation who care enough about the protection of our state’s natural resources to take time from their schedule to make a difference,” said Park Superintendent Jonathan Griffith.

“Robbie is a fine young man and obviously cares deeply about his local state park. I hope to see his name in a park ranger applicant pool someday.”

FRIENDS STAGE FIRST STATE CONFERENCE

More than 100 friends of North Carolina state parks, including local support groups, park advisory committee members and volunteers, gathered on their own time and dime to discuss the many ways non-profit organizations can help individual state parks and the system as a whole.

It was the first-ever statewide conference of Friends of North Carolina State Parks.

“I am really pleased and impressed by the commitment, demonstrated by so many people to be with us,” Lewis Ledford, state parks director, said at the meeting in Nag’s Head Jan. 21-23.

“These people share a passion for our state parks and want to do what they can to improve park conditions, assist staff and help with marketing and community involvement.”

David Pearson, president of Friends of State Parks, told participants that the information they collected through multiple programs and many experts and speakers will be extremely beneficial.

“The people in this room are the local state parks’



DIFFERENT STAKEHOLDER GROUPS SHARED IDEAS AT THE CONFERENCE.

conduit to their business, elected, appointed and community leaders,” he said. “We’re here to provide tools to help you do the best job possible back home.”

The statewide umbrella organization has been active in recent months in helping to create new friends groups for individual parks and has sought ways to coordinate efforts among the various support groups.

Programs on the conference agenda explored partner-

ship objectives, forming and growing friends groups, and financial and tax code guidance for nonprofits.

State Sen. Harry Brown of Onslow County, who explained the many complicating factors facing lawmakers in dealing with a budget shortfall and other major policy issues in the General Assembly, was the keynote speaker.

The three-day conference concluded with a tour of nearby Jockey’s Ridge State Park.

BOAT ACCESS AREA IMPROVED

THE DINAH’S LANDING BOAT ACCESS AT GOOSE CREEK STATE PARK HAS REOPENED AFTER AN EXTENSIVE IMPROVEMENT PROJECT FUNDED BY THE N.C. MARITIME ACCESS AND WATERFRONT IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM. PARALLEL RAMPS REPLACED A SINGLE RAMP AND THE PARKING AREA WAS ENLARGED.



BRUSHING UP

SARAH MORRISON OF THE N.C. DIVISION OF WATER QUALITY HELPED ORGANIZE A GROUP OF AGENCY VOLUNTEERS TO WORK ON GROUP CAMP BUILDINGS AT WILLIAM B. UMSTEAD STATE PARK.



DENR EMPLOYEES LEND A HAND AT PARK

State employee volunteers converged with a corporate grant in December to help with the rehabilitation of Depression-era buildings in the group camps at William B. Umstead State Park.

It was part of a year-long effort to stabilize dozens of structures, all financed through a grant from outdoors outfitter REI.

A dozen employees from various divisions of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources used community service hours to spend a workday at the park spreading stain on the cabins.

"So many employees let these hours go to waste every year. And, we thought if we had good projects like this, we could get people out to them," said Sarah Morrison, who helped organize the workday.



EMPLOYEES OF THE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES SPREAD MORE THAN 100 GALLONS OF EXTERIOR STAIN ON CAMP BUILDINGS.

State employees are granted 24 hours of leave each year that they can dedicate to an approved community service project.

Morrison and others in a DENR Employees Forum planning group began searching for projects in state parks, beginning last year with invasive plant removal at Jordan Lake State Recreation Area.

The Umstead project was another perfect fit.

The Umstead Coalition, a friends support group for the park, snagged the \$20,000 grant from REI – double the company's usual amount – to stabilize 104 buildings in the park's four group camps. The principal stipulation is that most of the work must be done by volunteers.

Joe Lugiano, the park's volunteer coordinator, has surveyed each of the buildings and identified the repairs. He and volunteers have already been hard at work with needed repairs, but many more volunteers will be needed," said Jean Spooner of the Umstead Coalition.

REI has been rounding up help from among its members for weekend work sessions. And Lugiano has recruited a core group of volunteer supervisors.

Those with carpentry skills were put to work replacing and recycling aged siding, followed by teams spreading more than 100 gallons of exterior stain.

Young men of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and the Works Progress Administration (WPA) constructed the group camp buildings

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'FORT HAS ITS HEARTBEAT BACK'

Retracing the route of its predecessors, a replica Civil War-era, 32-pounder cannon made its way down the Neuse River basin and onto the ramparts of Fort Macon in December.

Instead of Confederate soldiers, this cannon was accompanied by a group of students from Wayne Community College, who fabricated the first aluminum gun carriage to be used at the state park. The artillery piece rode on a flatbed truck making ceremonial stops at historic sites in Kinston and New Bern.

It was then loaded by crane onto the fort.

A dedication ceremony and the first firing of the cannon with a five-pound gunpowder charge in January was the climax of a partnership between the state park and the community college that saved the state at least \$20,000 and which will add realism to fort tours.

Park Superintendent Randy Newman told a local newspaper, "The fort finally has its heartbeat back."

For several years, the park staff had hoped to replace two nonworking fiberglass cannon replicas on wooden carriages that have added atmosphere – but no bang – to the visitor experience. The staff was also discouraged having to periodically replace wooden gun carriages that gave way to the coastal salt spray.

Gene Peacock, the eastern district interpretation specialist and maintenance supervisor Johnny Johnson struck a deal with the mechanical engineering department at the college to create aluminum carriages similar to those used



THE REPLICA 32-POUNDER CANNON IS READIED FOR DELIVERY TO FORT.

at many federal historic sites. The project eventually involved dozens of mechanical drawing, metal fabrication, welding and painting students.

The work was completed for the cost of materials, mostly rectangular aluminum

tubing and wheels provided by a contractor.

Using an exhibit maintenance allocation from the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund, the park ordered its first operable cannon replica from a private firm in New Windsor, Md. The 10-foot-long, 4,200-pound cannon was delivered to the college in 2010 for final fitting on the carriage.

The cannon replicates a Model 1841 naval seacoast gun. Originals from the Norfolk naval yard were capable of hurling a 32-pound ball or an artillery shell up to three miles from the entrance to Beaufort harbor.

The replica is cast with a liner and can fire blank gunpowder charges for artillery demonstrations at the fort. Ranger Paul Branch – who often oversees the firing of a much smaller field piece at the fort – trained a volunteer gun

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CRANE LOWERS THE 4,200-POUND CANNON ONTO THE CARRIAGE AT WAYNE COMMUNITY COLLEGE.

GOVERNOR UNVEILS BUDGET PROPOSAL

Gov. Bev Perdue unveiled her proposed budget in late February for the 2011-13 biennium. The proposal includes some serious and significant reductions to programs across state government to overcome a projected \$2.4 billion shortfall.

The governor's budget proposal recommends eliminating about 5,000 positions across state government, including a considerable number of both filled and vacant positions in the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

Under the proposal, the Division of Parks and Recreation is directed to cut its budget by approximately 10 percent (\$3.1 million) through a Management Flexibility Reduction.

To avoid reduction in permanent staff, this would require closing most state parks two days a week. The division, however, has the flexibility to manage this adjustment to minimize the impact on programs, services and activities.

The General Assembly has until June 30

to finalize the budget, and presentation of the governor's proposal is the first step in a long process. Details of the governor's proposal will be discussed, debated and likely altered as a final budget is crafted.

The division, which as part of the administration is supportive of the governor's budget proposal, is committed to keeping its employees and its stakeholders informed as new developments arise.

"Like all agencies in DENR and elsewhere, we are challenged to find ways to become more economical and efficient in our day-to-day operations in order to meet our financial and management responsibilities and to fulfill our mission of providing quality outdoor recreation experiences, responsible natural resource management and environmental education," said Lewis Ledford, division director. "I know each of our staff will do their best to minimize the impact to the people we serve."

DISMAL SWAMP WALK ALREADY POPULAR

Even before maintenance mechanics Bruce Rountree and Carlton Griffin could finish their 2,000-foot boardwalk loop at Dismal Swamp State Park, visitors were anxious to use it – including a small black bear cub they found padding along the route early one morning.

Rountree and Griffin contributed about 95 percent of the labor for the park's amenity along with volunteer help from the park's friends group, staff from Merchants Millpond and 11 AmeriCorps workers who spent a week there near its completion.

The park dedicated the boardwalk Nov. 7. "They told me that every time they got out here to work, somebody showed up to watch. Everybody wanted to see what was going on," East District Superintendent Adrian O'Neal said at the dedication ceremony. "This has been a good return on investment and a labor of love for both the community and the staff."

The workers hammered 1,600 pounds of nails into 4,000 wooden planks and sank 480 posts into the soggy soil of the swamp to complete the job, alternately standing in icy water and sweltering humidity.

The boardwalk was the result of a \$50,000 grant for the materials from the federal Recreational Trails Program administered

through the Albemarle Resource Conservation and Development Council.

The park opened in 2008 with a modest 300-foot-long boardwalk that has been very popular with visitors, said Park Superintendent Joy Greenwood.

Trails on old roadbeds allow long hikes and bicycle rides into the park, but the boardwalk that winds through the heavy vegetation and over saturated soils is the best way of observing the true swamp habitat and wildlife.

The boardwalk is also the longest fully accessible trail in the state parks system.

It is another great opportunity to educate the community and traveling visitors, said Marshall Stevenson, chairman of the Albemarle council and of the Pasquotank county commissioners, "and will allow many of us to experience the wonders of the Great Dismal Swamp."

O'Neal told people at the ceremony that the boardwalk is also a symbol of the park's growth and development and of its economic contribution to the community.

A 2008 economic study found that for every dollar invested in a state park, the median return on that investment is about \$12. The rate of return is even greater when volunteers and staff partner on a new project.

CANNON

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

crew to handle the 32-pounder.

Kirk Keller, the mechanical engineering instructor at the college, said the experience was great for the school.

"It's a fantastic opportunity for the school and the people working on it, not only for the experience they'll gain, but also for helping out the state in a bad time and being a part of producing something that will be enjoyed by thousands of visitors," he said.

Actually, the creation of a working gun carriage is more exacting than that of a replica cannon.

Fort Macon's cannon used so-called "barbette" carriages with two interlocking structures. A long, bottom chassis pivoted on the brick gun mounts of the fort, and a top carriage piece – shaped like an inverted



STUDENTS LOAD THE GUN CARRIAGE ONTO A TRUCK FOR THE MOVE.

"A" – supported the cannon barrel. As the cannon fired, the recoil pushed the top carriage to the back of the chassis.

With the most difficult engineering work behind them,

the college students hope to make additional carriages for the fort, which still has the non-firing replicas on hand and which hopes to eventually add more working replicas.

VOLUNTEERS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

of rough-cut lumber, milled from the park's trees on site. They built the camps and much of the rest of the park's infrastructure during the late 1930s and 1940s.

Over the decades, maintenance of the cabins has been sporadic, leading to expected deterioration, especially of the exterior siding.

"I'm usually working inside a little 8-by-8 foot building, so this is great," said Travis Funderburk who was outside perched on a ladder staining a cabin gable overlooking Sycamore Lake. Funderburk is a monitoring specialist with the Division of Air Quality.

He said that living in Raleigh, he uses the park frequently and appreciates the chance to give something back.

Lugiano said that it's generally a lot easier to gather volunteers on weekends, so having state employees available for work during the week helps move the project along more quickly.

Morrison said that the employees group has also been to Carolina Beach and Morrow Mountain state parks for projects and worked



VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR JOE LUGIANO, LEFT, HELPS ORGANIZE THE WORK DAY.

with the Triangle Land Conservancy in Chatham County.

Only three of the four group camps are currently being used, and the organizers hope to finish repairs and staining on those by June, turning to buildings in the fourth camp late in 2011.

PARK RANGERS FORM HONOR GUARD

A state park ranger honor guard has been formed to represent the Division of Parks and Recreation at special ceremonies, with a color guard detachment making its first appearance at the division's superintendent's conference in November.

The six-person team is the nucleus of a larger honor guard team that eventually will be available for special events, such as division ceremonies and funerals, said Bryan Dowdy, chief ranger.

Ultimately a 12- to 15-person team will be organized, Dowdy said.

"We are now soliciting volunteers towards developing a larger, full honor guard team for events," he said. "Development of such a team and its function will take additional training and dedication by the volunteers and is a work in progress."

The initial team formed in July with training in marching and military drill under the direction of Phil King, the division's law enforcement specialist, who had prior military experience.

The five rangers who were initial members were solicited partly based on similar height and potential interest.

The honor guard is an all-volunteer effort and is open to all male and female division rangers who have at least one year of commissioned experience, have an exemplary work performance record and are height and weight proportionate



THE STATE PARKS SYSTEM HONOR GUARD RECENTLY SERVED AT A FUNCTION AT THE STATE CAPITOL.

with a clean-cut appearance.

A short application process includes approvals from supervisors, district superintendents, the chief ranger and chief of operations.

The division is purchasing some special uniform and equipment items for the effort.

The five rangers on the initial team are Keven Bischof of Goose Creek, Toby Hall of Lake Waccamaw, Ed Wilkerson of Medoc Mountain, Lance Huss of South Mountains and Rob Preston of Jordan Lake.

Dowdy said that a team of at least a dozen rangers would be necessary for some ceremonial occasions, especially for funerals that might require pallbearers, traffic control, church/funeral home duty and a flag presentation.

ATTENDANCE

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Recreation and Tourism Management estimated the state parks system's total annual economic impact at more than \$400 million.

The complete study can be found linked from the division's website, www.ncparks.gov.

Over the past 25 years, the state parks system has seen a dramatic 112 percent increase in visitation. In 1985, 6.6 million people visited state parks and state recreation areas.

The new Mayo River State Park in Rockingham County opened to the public in April, and attracted 36,772 visitors during its first year.

Also in 2010, the state parks system completed the first year's operation of a new reservations system with more than 250,000 users. The online and call center-based reservations system offers a popular visitor service and provides

useful demographic data about visitors to North Carolina's state parks.

The state parks system manages more than 215,000 acres, including 35 state parks and four state recreation areas and a system of state natural areas dedicated to conservation of rare resources. Through its New Parks for a New Century initiative, six new state parks have been added to the system since 2003.

Parks with significant increases in visitation included Hanging Rock State Park in Stokes County (38 percent), New River State Park in Ashe and Alleghany counties (31 percent), Goose Creek State Park in Beaufort County (29 percent) and Pettigrew State Park in Washington and Tyrell counties (26 percent).

CONTINUED ON PAGE 11

MOUNTAIN TRAIL SECTION DEDICATED

A 25-mile trail in Ashe, Watauga and Wilkes counties was officially designated as part of the North Carolina Mountains-to-Sea State Trail in October at the E.B. Jeffress Park on the Blue Ridge Parkway.

"Our volunteers have battled the effects of ice and wind storms and tough terrain, but now it's done. We're a giant step closer to completing the MST through the mountains," said Jim Hallsey, volunteer leader of the South Ashe Task Force of the Friends of the Mountains-to-Sea Trail (FMST).

The new section extends from just north of Blowing Rock to N.C. 16 at Glendale Springs, according to Allen DeHart, founder of the friends group, who began flagging the route 15 years ago. In addition to the Cascades waterfall, the new trail section passes by Jefferson Mountain Overlook, The Lump and Grandview Overlook.

The trail is part of the

ATTENDANCE

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 12

Noteworthy increases were also reported at Eno River State Park in Durham and Orange counties (15 percent), Fort Fisher State Recreation Area in New Hanover County (12 percent), Merchants Millpond State Park in Gates County (12 percent) and South Mountains State Park in Burke County (16 percent).

State Park officials said that extreme weather is frequently a factor in attendance. A period of extreme heat in July and August 2010 likely contributed to a dip in visitation.



ALAN DEHART OF THE FRIENDS GROUP, CAROL TINGLEY OF THE STATE PARKS SYSTEM AND MONIKA MAYER OF THE BLUE RIDGE PARKWAY CUT THE RIBBON FOR A 25-MILE SECTION OF THE TRAIL.

nearly completed, 330-mile mountain section that begins at Clingmans Dome in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park and mainly follows the parkway northeast to Stone Mountain State Park.

More than 150 federal, state and local officials attended the designation ceremony.

"Building the MST can only be accomplished through cooperative efforts," said Kate Dixon, FMST executive director. "We're fortunate to have a variety of federal and state agencies, local governments and private partners working hard to turn this bold vision into reality. Funding from the federal Recreational Trails Program and the state's Adopt-A-Trail has been critical to our successes."

"Twenty-five miles is a remarkable achievement," said Darrell McBane, head of the state parks system's trails program. "We are so grateful to the moun-

tain volunteers who have built this section, and to the many other partners and volunteers across the state who will make the Mountains-to-Sea State Trail a reality in years to come."

The MST is a 1,000-mile linear state park, which is about half complete. Some sections are managed by the Division of Parks and Recreation, and other sections are managed by various federal, state, local and private partners.

When complete, the sections will form a corridor that stretches from Clingmans Dome to Jockey's Ridge State Park on the Outer Banks.

Each year, thousands hike and bike various sections of the trail. In 2010, President Obama and the First Lady walked a portion of the MST near Asheville. The idea for the trail originated more than 25 years ago while Hallsey was a member of the state parks system staff.

2010 OFFERED ARRAY OF HIGHLIGHTS

The opening of new state park accesses to the public at Lake James and Mayo River were state park highlights in 2010, according an official listing of accomplishments reported by the Division of Parks and Recreation to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

System Development

The state parks system opened Mayo River State Park in April with interim facilities on a portion of 1,961 acres devoted to the park in Rockingham County. It becomes North Carolina's 35th state park open to the public.

Lake James State Park dedicated the first public facilities on a 2,915-acre tract purchased in 2004 from Crescent Resources Inc., an acquisition that expanded the state park to six times its former size.

The facilities include a swim beach, bathhouse, picnic grounds and infrastructure that will lead to further development of the tract in Burke County in accordance with a recent master plan.

Raven Rock State Park opened a new visitor center in July, the 20th such facility in the state parks system. Built to sustainable standards of the U.S. Green Building Council, the center offers an exhibit hall, teaching auditorium and classroom and is augmented by an accessible nature trail.

Planning

A master plan for Haw River State Park in Guilford and Rockingham counties was completed and similar master plans for Carvers Creek State Park in Cumberland County and Chimney Rock State Park in Rutherford and surrounding counties reached the final draft stage.

The master plans will guide development of the state parks for 15-20 years and will set priorities for recreation facilities and natural resource protection.

Environmental Education

Forty-four state park rangers and support personnel earned certification as environmental educators, each completing more than 200 hours of intensive training and service projects that included a trash-free beach zone, self-guided nature walks and extensive trail improvements.

All state park rangers and superintendents have either completed the environmental education training or are enrolled in the curriculum.

In December 2010, North Carolina hosted the 34th Annual Southeast State Parks Program



TOP TO BOTTOM, NEW FACILITIES AT MAYO RIVER, RAVEN ROCK AND LAKE JAMES STATE PARKS.

Seminar in Atlantic Beach. "Discovering Diversity" was the theme for the conference that brought together more than 80 representatives from 12 states, several universities and conservation organizations.

The Junior Ranger program continued to grow thanks largely to partnerships with Great Outdoor Provision Co. and Friends of State Parks. More than 300 youth earned Junior Ranger patches by attending programs, completing an activity book and doing a park stewardship project.

Sustainability

The Fort Macon State Park Coastal Education and Visitor Center, dedicated in 2009, received a gold rating in the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design program of the U.S. Green Building Council, the first non-university, state-owned building to earn the distinction.

All new state park building facilities are built to meet these national recognized standards for sustainability.

Parks and Recreation Trust Fund

Grants totaling \$9.2 million for parks and recreation projects were distributed to 32 local governments in North Carolina from the N.C. Parks and Recreation Trust Fund, offering matching funds for facilities such as greenways, playgrounds, athletic fields and community centers.

The program is administered by the Division of Parks and Recreation with grant decisions made by an appointed Parks and Recreation Trust Fund Authority.

GWINN SUPERINTENDENT AT MORROW

Jason Gwinn, a veteran state park ranger, has been promoted to superintendent of Morrow Mountain State Park in Stanly County. He succeeds Tim McCree, who retired as superintendent earlier this year.

A superintendent is the chief of operations and administration at a state park or state recreation area with wide-ranging responsibilities for staffing, training, law enforcement, visitor services, natural resource protection and environmental education.

A native of Kentucky, Gwinn is a 2002 graduate of the University of Maine with a bachelor's degree in forestry and recreation management.

He joined the state parks system in 2003



SCHEWLAKOW TO LEAD CLIFFS PARK

Dan Schewlakow, a veteran state park ranger, has been promoted to superintendent of Cliffs of the Neuse State Park in Wayne County. He succeeds Lyndon Sutton, who retired as superintendent earlier this year.

A superintendent is the chief of operations and administration at a state park or state recreation area with wide-ranging responsibilities for staffing, training, law enforcement, visitor services, natural resource protection and environmental education.

A native of New Jersey, Schewlakow attended Cumberland County College and Richard Stockton College, graduating in 2004 with a bachelor's degree in biology and education.

Having worked as an environmental consultant and as a seasonal employee, he joined the



as a park ranger at Medoc Mountain State Park and transferred to Eno River State Park in 2004. Gwinn was promoted to an advanced ranger position at Lake Norman State Park in 2008, where he supervised seasonal staff. He holds certifications in environmental education and intermediate law enforcement.

"Morrow Mountain is one of our oldest state parks with a broad array of recreation opportunities, and Jason's solid experience in all phases of park management will be valuable in guiding the park's future development," said Lewis Ledford, state parks director. "He also has a keen sense of the park's history and its importance to the community."

Gwinn said, "Morrow Mountain is a park rich in natural resources and human history with an experienced staff and strong community support. I feel blessed to be given the opportunity to guide the park and look forward to becoming a member of the local community."

Morrow Mountain State Park opened in 1939, and now encompasses 4,496 acres. It reported visitation of 370,782 in 2010.

state parks system fulltime in 2006 at William B. Umstead State Park and transferred to Lake Norman State Park in 2008. He has held lead ranger positions in natural resource management, law enforcement and education. He holds certifications in environmental education and canoe instruction.

"Dan's leadership roles in education, natural resource management and law enforcement allow him to bring invaluable experience to Cliffs of the Neuse State Park, which is growing with a new visitor center under construction and a new emphasis on interpretive programming," said Lewis Ledford, state parks director.

Schewlakow said, "I'm looking forward to getting to know the staff, and hope I will be another asset to an already great park. I'm excited about the new LEED visitor center and know what it will mean for the people of Wayne County. I appreciate the hard work and time that the park staff and district staff have dedicated it."

Cliffs of the Neuse State Park was established in 1945, and now encompasses 892 acres. It reported visitation of 193,704 in 2010.

MORROW MOUNTAIN

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

sonal history is made, said Underwood, who was raised with trips to Morrow Mountain and proposed to his wife beside Lake Tillery.

“This new museum is a gateway to our own memories and most of our collective history,” he said.

Underwood, director of the Stanly County Historical Preservation Commission and a member of the state park’s advisory committee, addressed more than 50 people at the dedication, including a group of descendents of James Morrow, an Albemarle businessman who donated about 1,000 acres to spur the drive to create a state park in the 1930s.

Alberta Boggan of the Lowder family, who was born on a homesite eventually included in the state park, cut the ribbon on the new exhibit hall.

Underwood said that American Indians began visiting the area about 13,000 years ago to fish and collect the mountain’s rhyolite for stone tools and weapons. The site as a ferry crossing for early trade spawned the town of Tinsdale, once the county seat boasting mills, schools and taverns. There were once 50 known homesites within the park’s boundaries.

The new exhibits in an 800-square-foot, 1960s-era stone building explore all the themes of Morrow Mountain with video, hands-on displays and dioramas.

An in-depth exhibit on stone toolmaking, a scale model of a river ferry and a computer-based, interactive bird exhibit are featured, along with a three-dimensional map of the Uwharrie Mountains.

“Every visit to a state park is an opportunity for the entire family to learn and to interact



UNDERWOOD SPEAKS TO CROWD AT DEDICATION. with natural and cultural history. These exhibits will complement self-discovery and interpretive programs by our rangers, and broaden the visitor experience,” said Lewis Ledford, state parks director.

Ron Anundson, a park ranger and acting superintendent at Morrow Mountain, said that the park’s staff worked hard to keep the project as a priority over several years. Martin Kane, an exhibits specialist, adopted the project as well, acting as a photographer, videographer and writer for many of the exhibits and making countless trips to the park.

The project represents an investment of \$220,000 from the N.C. Parks and Recreation Trust Fund, the principal funding source for capital projects and land acquisition in the state parks system.

The exhibits were fabricated and installed by Studio Displays inc. of Charlotte.

NORTH CAROLINA STATE PARKS
MONTHLY ATTENDANCE REPORT
DECEMBER, 2010

NC STATE PARK	February 2011	TOTAL YTD Feb-11	February 2010	TOTAL YTD Feb-10	% CHANGE (2011/2010) Feb YTD	
Carolina Beach	33,976	69,796	28,432	51,724	19%	35%
Chimney Rock	3,004	4,505	2,023	4,104	48%	10%
Cliffs of the Neuse	9,346	15,993	7,097	14,782	32%	8%
Crowders Mountain	39,069	59,156	23,509	43,714	66%	35%
Dismal Swamp	6,205	9,356	2,203	4,355	182%	115%
Elk Knob	1,942	2,974	236	712	723%	318%
Eno River including Occoneechee Mountain	36,514	66,789	18,816	39,833	94%	68%
Falls Lake	20,828	29,717	9,956	22,588	109%	32%
Fort Fisher	24,775	38,346	15,583	32,780	59%	17%
Fort Macon	47,556	96,528	39,466	83,230	20%	16%
Goose Creek	7,460	13,766	13,920	28,664	-46%	-52%
Gorges	3,051	5,721	1,689	4,563	81%	25%
Grandfather Mountain	0	235	26	89	-100%	164%
Hammocks Beach	4,530	9,933	3,309	9,190	37%	8%
Haw River	1,380	2,198	842	1,388	64%	58%
Hanging Rock	24,360	41,193	9,598	19,230	154%	114%
Jones Lake	0	912	1,430	2,404	-100%	-62%
Jordan Lake	10,195	22,435	11,774	22,504	-13%	-0%
Jockey’s Ridge	30,329	56,359	29,484	55,141	3%	2%
Kerr Lake	37,955	66,902	25,004	49,688	52%	35%
Lake James	0	17,857	6,746	13,945	-100%	28%
Lake Norman	27,108	47,892	20,565	43,212	32%	11%
Lake Waccamaw	4,680	8,304	4,350	8,966	8%	-7%
Lumber River	3,228	5,756	4,516	8,584	-29%	-33%
Mayo River	1,992	3,628	0	0	-100%	-100%
Merchants Millpond	15,040	23,601	9,900	18,856	52%	25%
Medoc Mountain	2,773	6,947	1,700	3,793	63%	83%
Mount Mitchell	1,469	2,008	485	918	203%	119%
Morrow Mountain	22,806	37,910	14,400	27,320	58%	39%
New River including Mount Jefferson	7,016	12,992	6,590	16,524	6%	-21%
Pettigrew	3,109	5,795	3,006	6,531	3%	-11%
Pilot Mountain	0	3,090	12,000	24,496	-100%	-87%
Raven Rock	13,066	22,278	8,618	18,364	52%	21%
Singletary Lake	663	1,929	1,006	2,575	-34%	-25%
South Mountains	12,046	20,114	6,450	15,276	87%	32%
Stone Mountain	18,232	31,612	8,988	21,132	103%	50%
Weymouth Woods	4,552	8,926	3,319	7,377	37%	21%
William B. Umstead	0	64,477	46,998	111,475	-100%	-42%
SYSTEMWIDE TOTAL	480,255	937,930	404,034	840,027	19%	12%

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WITH A STATE PARKS
SPECIALTY LICENSE TAG



The Division of Motor Vehicles is accepting applications and payment for these special license plates. There is a \$30 fee in addition to regular license fees (\$60 for personalized plates). Additional fees support conservation through the Parks and Recreation and Natural Heritage trust funds.

Information at www.ncparks.gov
or www.ncdot.org/dmv



Our Mission Remains...

to protect North Carolina's **natural diversity**;
to provide and promote **outdoor recreation**
opportunities throughout North Carolina;
to exemplify and encourage **good stewardship**
of North Carolina's natural resources for all
citizens and visitors.

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SAFETY ZONE

DON'T NEGLECT TO DISCONNECT

- ✓ Lock out all potential energy sources before equipment maintenance or repair.
- ✓ Have your work crew establish its own lockout/tagout. Never work under another crew's lockout/tagout, even for a moment.
- ✓ Before returning equipment to service, be sure everyone involved knows your plans.
- ✓ Use the principles of lockout/tagout at home, as well.

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